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SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT CARTER IN GHANA FEBRUARY 3-5:
GUINEA WORM ERADICATION

1. (SBU) Former President Jimmy Carter and members of the Carter Center visited Ghana February 3-5 to rally support to eradicate the last one percent of guinea worm cases worldwide. Carter attended a Country Team briefing and reception hosted by Ambassador Yates, visited guinea worm infested areas, met with leaders in the Northern Region and President of Ghana John Agyekum Kufuor. Throughout his trip, Carter reiterated the need for a concerted effort by the GoG to eradicate guinea worm. Harsh in his criticism for the lack of concerted effort, Carter would not relent on what he saw as a definitive lack of commitment by the current administration to effectively tackle this preventable disease. However, after meeting with Kufuor, Carter left with a sense of Ghana's renewed commitment to eradicate Guinea worm. End Summary.

2. (U) Former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalyn Carter brought a delegation from the Carter Center to Ghana on February 3-5 to assess Ghana's failure to eradicate Guinea Worm, a debilitating water-borne disease that afflicts over 35,000 people. Ghana represents about 27 percent of the remaining guinea worm cases. Accompanying President Carter from the Carter Center were Jeff Carter, Richard Blum, John Hardman, Dr. Ernesto Ruiz-Tiben and Nancy Konigsmark. President Carter and his team first met with members of the Country Team who briefed him on the current state of Ghana's economic, political and health affairs. At the end of the briefing, Carter's primary focus was why Ghana performs so poorly in eradicating Guinea worm. The Carter delegation then attended a reception hosted by Ambassador Yates giving key health officials, including the Minister of Health Dr. Kwaku Afriyie, the opportunity to meet with his team. The Carters asked that the international community to do all it could to ensure GoG commitment to eradicating the disease. Ghana just needs a little push said Mrs. Carter. The theme of the trip, "Committed to Finishing the Job," became a mantra reiterated throughout the visit.

3. (U) On February 4 the Director General of the WHO Dr. Jong-Wok Lee and Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF Dr. Kul Gautam joined the Carter delegation, the Minister of Health and Ambassador Yates on a trip to guinea worm infested areas in the Northern Region. Carter visited guinea worm endemic villages and watched a demonstration of the simple filtering techniques that prevent the disease. He also met with health leaders to get their perspective on the current state of the disease. He stated that a lack of boreholes does not exculpate Ghana since guinea worm had been eradicated in areas where there were no boreholes and no easy access to water. He made it clear that he found the excuse unacceptable and that more needed to be done to mobilize resources to rid Ghana of the often debilitating affliction.

4. (U) During his press conference with a number of representatives of international and local press, Carter stated that Ghana is not doing enough to eradicate the disease. He also did not accept the excuse that the reason behind the poor performance was due to a lack of boreholes, something leaders in the infested areas told him time and again. He noted that drier, poorer countries had managed to eradicate the disease and that Ghana could not wait for the solution in a borehole and pointed out that even a country at war like Sudan was reducing cases. He also noted that education and filtering are the key components to eradication efforts.

5. (U) After a full day in Tamale, President and Mrs. Carter visited President Kufuor who welcomed and thanked them for the Carter Center's advocacy and support for Guinea worm eradication in Ghana. President Carter repeated comments he had made throughout the day about Ghana falling behind the majority of other countries in eradicating the disease. President Kufuor said he knew Ghana could and should do better, citing the need for better education and for more bore holes. Carter diplomatically responded that he understood the importance of deep wells for villages, but maintained his mantra that filtering water is all that is needed to eradicate the disease. Dr. Gautam told Kufuor that one of Ghana's most illustrious public servants Kofi Anan had made a two-minute video on Guinea worm and pointed out that most of the victims are children. President Carter also convinced Kufuor to add a 30 second spot of his own. In the course of the 30-minute meeting, President Carter invited President Kufuor to the Carter Center, and they also discussed election monitoring. President Carter offered the

services of his Center to Kufuor. It was the first meeting between these two leaders and very positive and cordial.

16. (SBU) Comment: The international media attention was focused on Ghana's underperformance on Guinea worm and the picture was not pretty. Constituting 27 percent of the current Guinea worm cases worldwide in an area where poorer and drier countries have outperformed were an uncomfortable position for Ghana. After having the spotlight shined on its problem, Ghana seems ready to tackle this preventable disease, using the limited resources necessary to do the job. End Comment.
Lanier